

Letter from Hiram P. Sprague to Juliana Reynolds, February 22, 1862

Camp Jameson Feb the 22nd 1862

Dear Cousin,

I confess myself much pleased in getting a letter from you and was very glad to hear from you. I have looked for a letter from you But Still I knew you had So much buisness and Care on your mind and that has always been an reasonable excuse to me for you not writing. You want that I Should you a long letter. I will try and Comply with your request So far as I am able. We have Such a poor way of writing here and Such bad pens that I always hate to write on that account and a fellow gets knocked around Somtimes So that he can hardly keep his pen on the paper that he is writing on. But I will try and give you all that information I can.

You wanted to know about the Brass band. I do not know much about it but I beleive their is Some nice men Connected with it but their is Some that is a little inclined to be rough. But Do not think you kneed give yourself any Uneasiness about Tilton for as far as I know he Conducts himself with propriety and I think I have as good a chance of knowing a[s] any one here for I see him more or less Every Day and I have the missfortune to be Connected with about as bad a mess as is in this Camp. Playing Cards and Cursing and Swaring is the principal trait of Some in and Tilton is often in here and has never to my knowlege engaged in a game. He has lost all of his frivouslessness and Conducts himself as a gentleman. I do not Say this to flatter you and think others will Say the Same.

As to the position the Brass band takes in action I do not know. We have had no fighting but musiceans are not generaly as much Exposed as fighting men and Still there are times when they are in as much Danger as others in Case of a retreat or where the enemy

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attacks a force on the march from an ambush. In Such a Case the band is in front or are in front of their respective regiment and are the first Exposed. But when they March out from Camp to fight they take no music along Except one tenor Drum. As to the amount of pay that Each Member gets per month I do not know. Some get more Some less. They are paid according to the position they take in the Band and the instrument they play. I think that the leader gets 40 a month.

The news about the War is Still good. The traitors are getting it on Every Side and their Case begins to look Disperate. The Capture of Fort Henry and Donaldson, the taking of Roanoke island, Elizabeth City, Edonton, Clarkville and Several other important places has given rebellion a death blow and one from which it will never recover. It is reported upon good athority that they are Drawing their troops from Manassass [Manassas] and Sending them South. They are only going to leave thirty thousand at Manassass [Manassas]. It is also reported that Gen Beauregard is at Nashville with Sixty thousand men and intends to make a Stand at that place. But I think it will do him no good as our force will number Something near a hundred thousand men when they attack that place and I think that they will hereafter find our force Sufficient to meet them. In any Case at least I think there will be no more Bullrun [Bull Run] or Balls Bluff disasters. And as our forces advance they will Carry relief, joy and hope to thousands of hearts that is as Loyal to the union as any in the North.

I have a word to Say about the people of this country. They are a poor, Ignorant, degraded Set. I Conversed with persons of Evry grade for here there is a marked distinction or difference made between the rich and poor. The poor Class are all almost Universally ignorant and the rich are but little better. They geneally have Some learning although it is very limeted with the Exception of one or two out of a family that is Educated to fill office or Some other important places Such as Doctors, Lawers, Clerks, Overseers &c. They all talk here like the Negro and the raising of blacks is their principal buisness. The land here is Owned in large Estates the Same as it is owned by the Nobility in Europe and they have Depended on Slave Labour to keep it up and the Country Shows how well

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they have Succeeded. There is thousands of acres of Land here thats is as barren as our turnpike at home. There has been Some large and Splendid farms here But the Cedars and dwarf pines have been yearly Closeing in upon them and know where there was good farms there Scarce none at all. But yet you can now here and there see a good farm but its owner is a man that was born and raised in the North and knows the difference between free and Slave Labour. And now in taken Everything into Consideration it is not to Be Wondered at that this rebellion has raised its hydra head. But I hope after this scourge which is the Worst of all this Country will Come forth crippled. It will be to [?] on the great principals of the human freedom and Free labour.

You wanted if general Hentzleman [Heintzelman] going on an Expedition. There was Some talk of that kind Some time ago but was not intended to take any men from here. I belive his men was to be taken from the reserve force that is back in old Pennsylvania but I have heard nothing of it lately. The 22nd has been a great Day here. The Booming of Cannons has been heard in evry quarter. Our regiment out on picket and did not get into Camp in time to have Doings. They have great fun with Oliver Smith. It is the first time he was Ever out on picket and it So happened that there was a wench Came to the post he was on. There is four on a post and when their is any person Come from the outside of the picket lines and wants to go any place on the inside there to [be] one of the guards has to go along to watch them so they Sent Oliver with the old Wench to guard her.

There is prospect that we will have to advance here before long. Its thought that the rebels have abandoned their blockadeing forts Down on the Potomac below here. There has been fireing heard there for Some days and we used to here them every day more or less fireing on our vessels passing up and down. I will Soon have to Close. My pen is getting bad and my Composition Worse. But I hope you make alowance for me Conside[r]ing the place I am in. Tilton is well. Give my best respects to Thomas and the rest of your family and to all my friends. Tell Jane I will write to her as Soon as I close this. If you please

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answer this letter if a letter it can be Called. So good by. This from affectionate Cousin with great respect.

H.P. Sprague